

The National Rural Development Partnership (NRDP) is a network of established and emerging rural institutions that work together to strengthen rural America. The principal members of the network are State Rural Development Councils in 37 of the 50 states.

Each of the State Councils, which are comprised of active members from a broad range of rural development-related organizations, is served by a full-time executive director. States differ in how they are organized and in the rural issues they decide to address.

This profile is one in a series highlighting the work of the State Councils.

For more information about the National Rural Development Partnership:

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**National Rural  
Development  
Partnership**

# *State Profile*

## **New Mexico Rural Development Response Council**

In 1992, the New Mexico Rural Development Response Council was created under the direction of Governor Bruce King within the state Economic Development Department. The Council chose to add the word "response" to its title to reflect that, in a state with only 101 incorporated communities, it would strive to respond to the individual needs of the towns and tribes it serves. To increase its financial and political flexibility, the Council has since become an independent, non-profit organization. With over 250 members from across the state, NMRDRC is one of the principal actors in New Mexico's rural issues and economic development.

Recently, NMRDRC has played a major role in several key initiatives, including retraining displaced workers, linking federal and state resources to tribal governments, and assisting communities with business and



economic development. The Council also has completed several statewide regional listening sessions. Based on needs identified in these sessions, NMRDRC developed a work plan with projects tailored to meet those needs.

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## **Contacting NMRDRC**

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NMRDRC has a membership of more than 250 individuals and organizations from across the state. The 16-member Board of Directors, which meets bi-monthly, includes representatives from:

- ▼ University of New Mexico
- ▼ New Mexico State University
- ▼ Eastern Plains Council of Governments
- ▼ Northwest New Mexico Council of Governments
- ▼ County Government
- ▼ Veterans' Administration
- ▼ New Mexico Department of Agriculture
- ▼ The Navajo Nation
- ▼ Fannie Mae Corporation
- ▼ Public Service Company of New Mexico
- ▼ New Mexico Department of Labor
- ▼ US Department of Agriculture



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## New Mexico Rural Development Response Council at Work

### Regional Listening Sessions

NMRDRC sponsored four regional listening sessions around the state to gain local input on how to best use its resources to help communities in their development efforts. Through pre-session planning meetings with community members, NMRDRC tailored these sessions to address the specific needs of communities in each region. Sessions included five or six discussion groups that targeted a particular issue, such as welfare reform, economic development, or water protection. The sessions were well attended by local community members, state and local government officials, and NMRDRC representatives. Based on input from these sessions, the Council developed a multi-project work plan. Issues being addressed in the plan include welfare-to-work, water management, agriculture, small business development, housing, and telecommunications infrastructure.

### Job Retraining Grant

When the Levi Strauss manufacturing plant in Roswell closed in 1998, about 500 employees were laid off, pushing the city's unemployment rate to nearly 13 percent. Working with local government officials and the Levi Strauss Foundation, the Council helped implement a retraining program for these displaced workers. Because employment opportunities in the Roswell area are scarce, the team utilized an Employer Driven Customized Training Program. Under this program, employers are surveyed to identify their employment needs and the training necessary for the jobs they have available. Displaced workers are then matched with jobs and provided

any necessary training. Now complete, the program placed over 300 displaced workers in jobs.

### Community Development Training Manual

Under recent state legislation, a New Mexico community now can provide businesses with financial assistance to encourage them to choose to locate in the community. To comply with this statute, a community must first prepare a comprehensive Economic Development Plan and have it

approved by voters. NMRDRC has helped communities create the required plan by adapting and updating a 10-year-old Community Training Manual that had been used for past economic development activities. The modified manual includes a template plan on disk and provides information on planning for an industrial park, assembling a business retention and expansion program, and other economic development techniques.

*"The thing that impresses me with this Council is their passion for the mission. No one is here to be on a committee or a board; they really believe in what they are doing."*

**Pamela Galbraith**  
University of New Mexico Hospital

### Native American Resource Fair

In January 2000, NMRDRC helped organize and put on the Native American Resource Fair. This event brought together dozens of federal, state, and local non-profit organizations in a trade fair setting to market their programs to tribal communities in New Mexico. About 350 members of the public attended the fair, which was held in the showroom of the Tesuque Pueblo Casino. The Council, in partnership with the Navajo Nation and the All-Indian Pueblo Council, intends to turn this event into an annual affair.